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DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: October 22, 2007

#### Fischer Visits Egypt

1. Austrian President Heinz Fischer began a three-day official visit to Egypt at the weekend. He is accompanied by Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik and a business and cultural delegation. Topping the agenda of his meetings with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif will be bilateral issues, as well as the situation in the Middle East, the conflict over Iran's nuclear program, and developments in Iraq. Reporting on the visit to Egypt of Austrian President Heinz Fischer, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, and a large business delegation, liberal daily Der Standard writes that the signing of a letter of intent on the expansion of the two countries' cooperation in the technical sector is among the issues on the agenda. The daily also publishes an interview with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who emphasized that a failure of the planned Mideast conference in Annapolis later this year would have "serious consequences in the Middle East and beyond. The region cannot afford yet another failed peace initiative." On Iraq, he suggests that "no-one, neither the US, nor Europe, nor the Arab states know" how the situation there might develop. The United States, Mubarak argues, "invaded Iraq without having a clear vision of how to get out again." On Egypt's relations with Austria, he said: "The relations between Austria and Egypt date back to the 19th century, and they are good and profound political relations, both at the bilateral level as within the framework of Egypt's relations with the EU. Our economic ties are also developing very well; and there is a lot of cooperation in other areas, including tourism and culture."

#### FBI Transformation

2. During a security conference in Leogang, Salzburg province, earlier this month, Paul Caldwell, Legal Attach at the US Embassy in Vienna, outlined "radical changes" regarding the structure of the FBI, which came in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. From a purely "domestic criminal investigation department," the FBI had gradually transformed into an "intelligence-service type of organization" with the aim of preventing future attacks, Caldwell stressed. On October 19, mass-circulation daily Kurier, reporting on a security meeting in Leogang, Salzburg province, quoted the US Embassy Vienna's Legal Attach Paul Caldwell as explaining that in addition to the changes in the FBI's structure, staff assigned to anti-terrorist efforts has also been doubled. Also, special emphasis is being given to cooperation with other police and security departments. Particularly, cooperation with the CIA was now "working perfectly." Caldwell also warned that al Qaeda, though weakened, was

getting stronger again.

In related news, liberal daily Der Standard, also on October 19, quoted the Legal Attach as underscoring that the attempted attack by "rucksack bomber" Asim C., who had tried to enter the US mission earlier this month with a backpack filled with two hand grenades, nails and a book on Islam, was "not an act of terrorism."

### Opposition Wins Polish Vote

¶3. Poland's Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski has conceded defeat in early general elections. His conservative Law and Justice Party won about 31 percent of the votes, compared to the opposition Civic Platform's 41 percent. As things now stand, the Civic Platform and its preferred coalition partner, the Polish Peasants Party, will win a majority in the Lower House of Parliament. Austrian media speak of a record voter turnout of over 55 percent - the highest since ¶1989.

Like all Austrian media, centrist daily Die Presse reports on the early general elections in Poland, which have resulted in a defeat of Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski's Law and Justice Party. The daily terms the vote "the most important election since 1989," and says that the decision between Tusk and Kaczynski ended up being a "vital, decisive question" for the country and its political orientation. It was a decision not only between urban and rural areas, but also between tradition and modernization, the Presse says, adding that the Polish voters further emphasized that with a record turnout.

### Turkey Vows to Defeat PKK Fighters

¶4. Turkey has vowed to take tough action after Kurdish rebels killed about 17 soldiers in fighting in northern Iraq at the weekend. Around 32 PKK fighters are also said to have been killed. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stressed that Turkey would pay any price to defeat terrorism. He added, however, that the United States had asked Ankara to hold back from sending troops into northern Iraq for a few more days.

In its report on the clashes between Turkish soldiers and Kurdish PKK rebels in northern Iraq, mass-circulation provincial daily Kleine Zeitung suggests that the latest developments have made a Turkish military intervention and a war in northern Iraq increasingly likely. According to security experts, the PKK wants to provoke a Turkish invasion of northern Iraq, in order to win back the support from Turkish Kurds, which it had lost in recent times. That way, the PKK is hoping to boost Kurdish nationalism on both sides of the Turkish-Iraqi border, the daily argues. Iraq, meanwhile, appears helpless in the face of these mounting tensions, according to the Kleine Zeitung.

### Larijani Resigns

¶5. The Iranian government announced at the weekend that Ali Larijani, its top nuclear negotiator had resigned. Larijani, who in many cases held a hard-line view on the nuclear standoff between Iran and the international community, was nevertheless known for his pragmatic stance on the issue. Austrian media view his resignation as a victory for President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which could further complicate ongoing talks on Tehran's nuclear ambitions. Larijani is succeeded by Saeed Jalili, a Deputy Foreign Minister for European and American Affairs.

The resignation of Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani has "added a new urgency to the nuclear dispute," suggests independent provincial daily Salzburger Nachrichten. Also, the choice of Saeed Jalili -- a hard-line supporter of President Ahmadinejad without any significant diplomatic experience -- as Larijani's successor, could lead to an escalation of Tehran's dispute with the West, the daily believes. Nonetheless, Larijani's departure and Jalili's appointment do not mean an end of Iran's negotiations with the West, as Tehran has no interest in canceling the nuclear talks. However, they will become even tougher than before, the Salzburger Nachrichten argues.